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NEWS

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sports one & basketball

GRIZZLIES OPEN AGAINST SOUTHERN ILLINOIS IN LAS VEGAS HOLIDAY CLASSIC FRIDAY

MISSOULA---

Bob Cope's University of Montana Grizzlies, 5-1 going into a two-week holiday layoff, will open the Las Vegas Holiday Classic tournament Friday night at 8 p.m. MST against powerful Southern Illinois University.

Nevada Southern University, the host school for the two-day event, will meet San Diego State in the nightcap Friday at 9:45 p.m. MST.

Winners will meet for the title Saturday night at 9:45 p.m. MST, while losers will battle in the consolation game at 8 p.m. that same night.

Montana and Southern Illinois are the only teams of the tourney field that have not played since Dec. 14. The Salukis will be going into tourney play with a 4-2 record that includes a second-place finish in Tennessee's annual Volunteer Classic two weeks ago. In that event, SIU manhandled Texas 58-37, but dropped the title tilt to host Tennessee, 54-41.

The Salukis' only other loss came at the hands of Southern Methodist, 81-70. SIU has beaten Culver-Stockton, 80-66, Wichita State, 58-51, and Washington (Mo.), 68-39.

Last year's four top scorers are among the seven lettermen who returned at Southern Illinois this season. Top man for the Salukis is 6-3 Dick Garrett, who averaged 20.1 points per game last season. He holds the SIU home arena scoring mark with 46 points in last year's 130-67 win over Centenary.

Helping out Garrett are 6-3 Willie Griffin, 6-4 Chuck Benson and 6-7 Bruce Butchko, who averaged 11.9, 10.8 and 6.5 points per game, respectively. Butchko is a junior, and the other three are seniors.

Cope said that the Salukis are best known for their strong defensive efforts, as shown by the low scores they've allowed this season. They tend to press all over the floor.

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GRIZZLIES OPEN--2--

Nevada Southern and San Diego State were both nationally ranked in the top 20 on both major wire service small college polls last week.

Nevada Southern boasted a 4-2 record going into Monday night's game at home against Loyola of Louisiana. The Rebels were averaging 102 points per game, helped largely by a 126-116 win over Hiram Scott College Friday night in Las Vegas.

Three Rebels are averaging more than 20 points per game. The leader is Tom Watkins at 23.7, followed by Bruce Chapman, 22.7, and Don Lyons, 20.3. Defensively, the Rebs have given up 90 points per game.

NSU victories have been over Hastings College, 93-72, the University of Oklahoma, 103-84, Northern Michigan, 102-73, and Hiram Scott. The Rebels lost to Oklahoma City, 113-106, and Southwestern Louisiana, 84-82.

San Diego State had a 3-3 mark going into a Monday night game at home with the University of Minnesota. The Aztecs opened with three straight wins over Whittier College, Cal State at LA, and Redlands University, but lost three straight on the road to Ball State, Kentucky Wesleyan (the nation's top small college team), and Evansville University.

Von Jacobsen, averaging nearly 30 points per game going into the Midwest tour, is San Diego State's leading player.

Montana's starting lineup will have one new face at the Las Vegas event. That will be 6-5 junior forward Howard Clark of Kansas City, Mo., who will join 6-4 senior Ron Moore of Indianapolis, Ind. at forward. The center will be 6-8 junior George Yule of Newport Beach, Calif.

Starting at guards will be 5-10 sophomore Mike Heroux of Menasha, Wis. and 5-10 junior Harold Ross of Seattle, Wash.

Ross is the leading Grizzly scorer with 20.2 points per game, followed by Moore with 18.0 and Yule with 12.7.

Other Grizzlies making the trip will be center Steve Brown of Corvallis; guards Dave Gustafson of Simms, John Cheek of Anaconda and Don Wetzels of Cut Bank, and forwards Ray Dirindin of Lowell, Ind., Max Agather of Libby and Sid Rhinehart of Missoula.

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. GRIZZLIES OPEN--3--

The Grizzlies will be joined by several UM boosters who will make the trip to Las Vegas with the team.

The group will leave Missoula by bus Thursday morning at 7, and will fly by jet from Great Falls to the tournament city. The Montana team and boosters will return to Montana Sunday afternoon.

Montana's next home games will be Jan. 10-11 against the University of Idaho and Jan. 13 against Gonzaga University.